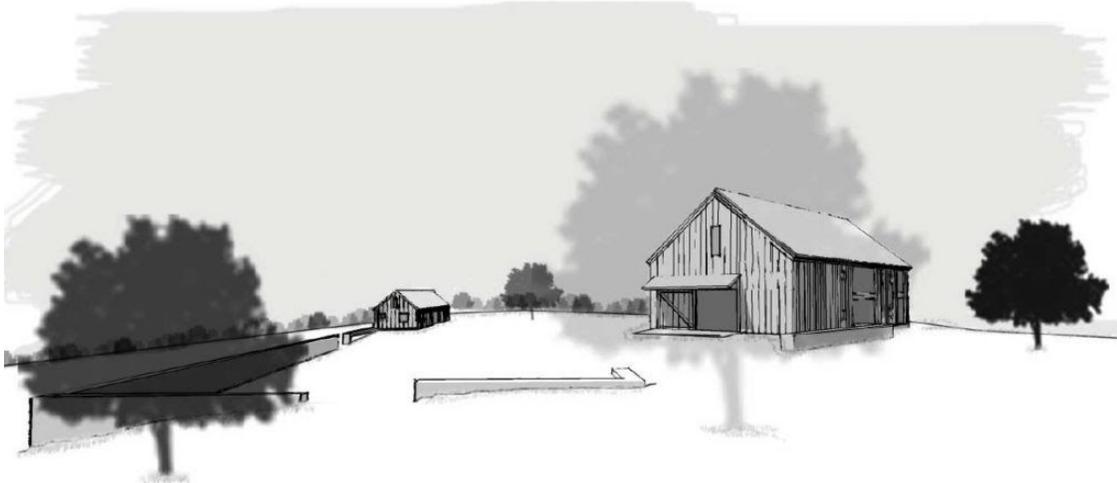


Island Autism Micro-Farm



Schematic design of Island Autism Center courtesy of Hutker Architects

The Island Autism Group has developed a vision for a micro-farm to include housing and a day programming center on Martha's Vineyard where children and adults with autism and similar intellectual disabilities can reach their greatest potential, toward lives filled with purpose and dignity in our island community.

Our goal is to provide much needed educational, physical, emotional, social, and community skills and support to autistic individuals and their families where they live. This will give families an alternative to the heart-wrenching decision to be separated when necessary resources are not available to them on the island.

With the support and accepting spirit of our island community, the Island Autism micro-farm will be a place for collaboration and cooperation. Island children and their parents could be confident that they will stay together.

The facility and programs will serve both children and adults with autism as well as similar intellectual and developmental disabilities. It will include an active micro-farm, residential housing, and facilities to support afterschool and summer programming.

Who we serve

The Island Autism Group has identified approximately 200 people, including 56 school-aged children diagnosed on the autism spectrum, undiagnosed adults, and family members impacted by autism. Many of these individuals are year-round residents. We also serve individuals who are summer visitors.



Therapeutic drumming with Rhythm of Life

Existing Programming

Since 2017, Island Autism has been offering afterschool and summer programming to 20 students in two age groups: 5-10 years old, and 11-17

years old. Some young adults who have ‘aged out’ of the school system at 22-years old continue to participate in our programs.

Each program offers students after-school opportunities similar to neurotypical students, to engage in therapeutic, social, and enrichment activities. Our programs serve students with autism as well as a variety of other disabilities. We are one of the only service providers on the island to provide extracurricular opportunities solely for disabled children.



Our 5-10 program focuses on extending IEP goals, developing social skills, and having fun. Since 2017, we’ve been bringing students each week to the Farm Institute, therapeutic horseback riding at Misty Meadows, programs at the Edgartown Library, the YMCA, and bowling at the Barn Bowl & Bistro.

Our 11-17 program helps strengthen relationships, introduce new experiences, develop social skills, and have fun. Students go horseback riding at Misty Meadows, participate in therapeutic drumming sessions with Rick Bausman, and sail on the lagoon through SailMV’s SailMobility program.

At each location, IAG provides trained staff to support the ability of our students to access each program to its maximum potential.

Programs at the Micro-Farm

The micro-farm will provide opportunities for physical skill development, functional life skills, job training, and healthy habits. Our farm will grow and sell fruit and vegetables at an onsite farm stand and local farmers markets, and distribute to local restaurants year-round. It will be capable of generating income.

Initially, the micro-farm will be managed through the collaboration and consultation of an existing Island farm. Later it will grow to include a barn, and an onsite farm manager. Guided by the horticultural expertise of our founder and other community farmers, the farm will provide hands-on opportunities for all members of the micro-farm community to participate in and learn about planting, harvesting, and conservation.

With the exception of the programs that are location-specific (for example, therapeutic horseback riding and bowling), our programs will be located at the micro-farm. Working on the farm and recreational use of the surrounding conservation land will allow for a range of physical and healthy activities.

Activities will be scheduled throughout each day, including art, music, games, cooking, and yoga.

For young adults, some of our activities will include life skills, job skills, and social skills. The micro-farm will be the kind of place where we might host occasional events such as a party or dinner for adolescents, allowing them a nurturing and safe environment in which to practice appropriate social skills.

Opportunities for Residents

We plan to support the broadest range of interests and vocations. An existing nearby bus stop and being in close proximity to the North Tisbury marketplace (including Martha's Vineyard Charter School, and the Island Gymnastics Center) will allow residents to access jobs, appointments, and activities across the island. Each day, some residents will choose to work on the farm and others will commute to work. Therapeutic and enrichment programs and opportunities will be tailored to the individual needs of residents.

There will be job opportunities at the micro-farm: in the barn, in the kitchen, at the farm stand, and in the farm garden. Adult residents will interact with younger children with autism in a way that builds positive connections and community, serving as positive mentors and role models.

Transportation

We have recently raised funds and have purchased a van that will be on site to transport program participants and residents around the island as needed.

Access to transportation and job coaching will allow us to strengthen and grow year-round partnerships with island organizations and businesses.

Facilities

Main House

The existing house site will be re-used to serve several purposes.

- **Kitchen:** A community kitchen for cooking classes and daily living, large enough to support group meals.
- **Community Meeting Space:** We see a need for a community meeting space for visiting lecturers and seminars could be held. Because of our unique location, we will be able to attract and host experts with a broad range of experience who will come to share their knowledge and offer seminars on anything from alternative communication technology to how to teach your child to ride a bike.
- **Bathrooms:** ADA-compliant bathroom on bottom floor
- **Office:** Administrative office space for the executive director and office assistant.
- **Apartment:** An onsite manager will require housing.

Other space purposes (listed by priority)

- **Craft / art studio**
- **Yoga / exercise studio**
- **Therapeutic drumming and music**
- **Library / media**

Residences

Our partnership with the Island Housing Trust will allow us to provide 5 housing units in varying sizes to support 12-14 residents along with support staff. The units will be permanently affordable with a permanent deed-restriction guaranteeing permanent affordability.

To support the full range of challenges and needs of individuals on the ASD spectrum, we envision housing that will allow for flexible configurations, from 2 bedroom units to 4 bedroom units. Some residents will require 24-hour staff support. Others will thrive in semi-independent settings, benefiting from staff being nearby but not necessarily living in the same unit.

Barn

A multi-level barn could serve several purposes.

First floor: Agricultural space

Second floor: Activity / classroom center, meeting space, exercise studio

Farm Stand

A farm stand will replace an existing structure in the field below the house.

Timeline

Phase I

- Replace existing house as programs and operations building
- Develop RFP for 2 - 4 br. residential units to support 8 residents and office space for support staff.
- Formalize partnership with an island farm to plan and manage farmland. Barn raised.
- Hire executive director

Phase II

- Executive director hires staff (program director, development coordinator, support staff)
- Construction of the 2 - 4 br. units. Residents move in.
- Put to working use 3-4 acres of cleared land. Plant and begin cultivation of fruits and vegetables.

Phase III

- Construction of 3 - 2 br. units. Residents move in
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- Purchase livestock (goats and chickens)
- Add 1 acre of land for farming. Contract with island landscaping company to expand field operation.

Staff

- **Executive Director**

The Executive Director will oversee all aspects of its operations and will be part of a team of dedicated individuals devoted to its success and mission.

- **Development & Marketing Director**

The Development & Marketing Director will spearhead development efforts as IAG continues to grow, seeking financial support from individuals, foundations and corporate sponsors.

- **Program Director**

The Program Director will oversee all aspects of both day programming (children) and adult programming.

- **Farm Director**

Initially we will contract with an island farm to manage the farm. Then, an on-site Farm Director will manage the day-to-day operation of the micro-farm.

- **Administrative and Support Staff**

Support staff will include an office manager and a mix of part-time and full-time staff, some living in residence to provide 24-hour support.

- **Seasonal Employment and Internship Program**

We will continue to provide employment and volunteer opportunities for Islanders who are already active in supporting those with autism. We will welcome graduate and undergraduate students from colleges and universities for relevant experience and field learning within their major areas of study.